RELIGIO
Clerici.

Σπένδειν καὶ θύειν καὶ τὰ πάτρια ἑκάστοις προσήκει, καθαρῶς καὶ μὴ ἀμελῶς.

Epictet.

By *T. A.*

LONDON:

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TO THE Equal READER.

FEar *not, good Reader! here is neither* Narrative, *nor* Letter out of the Countrey, *nor* Answer *nor* Rejoynder, *nor*, &c. *but a rambling* Medley *of retired thoughts, in in which however thou mayest trace some de-*

pendance and Connexion, if you pleaſe.

I deſign no Conteſt or Cavil in this Pygmie Treatiſe, *but a ſleight and ſudden Portrait in* Miniature *of naked Truth, as ſhe lately appeared to the Author in a Melancholy* retreat *of his for a few days. If therefore ſome Lines in this* Draught *ſeem (to Expert Artiſts) but very meanly*

meanly descriptive of the charms and Divine Excellencies of her Immortal Beauty, they must pardon the young Limner, *since so much dazling lustre might possibly confound him, and make his unpractic'd hand shake :* Totus tremo, horreóque postquam aspexi hanc. Terent. *Eunuch Act.* 1. *Scen.* 1.

And besides, this is but an Essay of Art,

mere tryal of skill, and the very first time that his Pencil hath been publick.

Thou knowest, Reader, that let Sham-Truths be drawn as severally as mens fancies please, (yet) she her self hath nevertheless one regular, uniform, eternal face. And there is most certainly such a thing as right Reason, though Rational men (which

I'le

I'le tell thee is very odd and amazing) by the very ſelf ſame pretended Guide *follow ſeveral diſtinct Tracks, and all but one Erroneous.*

But thou mayſt as well argue that the Pole-Star *is not ſteady, ſince many are bewildred and bemired by an* Ignis fatuus, *as raſhly ſuſpect true Reaſon, becauſe now a days Errours of all ſorts do impudently aſ-*

ſume its ſhape. And there is as undoubtedly ſuch a thing as true Religion, although ('tis monſtrous to conſider, that) we are at this very day, after 1700 years acquaintance, as hotly diſputing where and what ſhe is, as if we had hardly ever had a full and perfect view of her face.

This makes ſome Licentious perſons willing

to

to ſuſpect, that all Religion is but the general Laws of Nature, and (at the beſt) they reduce Chriſtianity itſelf to the firſt ſtage from whence it long ago ſet out, viz. Common Morality.

Diſputes and Conteſts will, I fear, never ceaſe, as long as Ambition and Avarice bear ſway in the world; but ſhould perverſe differences

rences by endleſs Super-
fœtations *ſwarm ſtill daily more and more, (which God prevent) yet may the moſt doubtful and ignorant Soul take ſafe Sanctuary in this laſt reſerve of irrefragable* Argument, viz. *follow ſtill with generous and ſtedfaſt reſolution, our* Royal, *our* Noble, *our* Honourable, *and our* Reverend Learned Leaders, *(till*

we

we can demonſtrate they are in the wrong) for thus at the very worſt we can hazard but a poſſible, pardonable miſtake, and that too in dutiful proſecution of our Chriſtian obedience. 1 Pet. 2. 13, 14.

Reader, I venture this ſmall Treatiſe out now, (at this wrangling juncture) but as the Forlorn hope *of what may hereafter bear a more par-*

particular relation to the Title-Page, *of which (I fairly forewarn thee Reader that) ſome will with Railing and Detraction tell thee, I was the unfitteſt of all men to Treat: Well, to the Wiſe, the Good and Moderate, I ſay,* No man knoweth the Spirit of Man, but the Spirit of Man that is in him: *And as for the reſt,* Odi profanum vulgus & arceo.

Farewell.

RELIGIO CLERICI.

IT prov'd matter of no ſmall wonder to a good old Heathen, when he obſerved ſuch various appearances of different Opinions, Humours and propenſions in his Countrymen of *Greece*; eſpecially too when he conſidered how that all theſe Contrarieties and Diſproportions proceeded

ded from men begot, born, and bred in the ſame Climate, under the ſame Laws, Conſtitutions, and Cuſtoms, and the ſource of all whoſe Inclinations and paſſions reſulted from one common ſimplicity of the very ſame ſpecifick humane nature. But if he was puzled in the reſolution of this ſcruple then, to what a far higher degree of aſtoniſhment would his Admiration have riſen, if he had lived in theſe days of ours, when (as if ſome extraordinary malignant Con-

junction

junction in the Heavens did in ſpite produce a general diviſion on Earth, eſpecially) in our poor Iſland there are as many different Paſſions and Affections, Plots and Agitations, Factions and Faſhions, Opinions and Religions, almoſt as men. And when too the Reaſons and Advantages for Unity and Agreement both in Principle and Practice, are far greater, and of a ſtamp more divine, than ever our Heathens Age or Countrey could pretend to.

There are two or three Conſiderations, that might eaſily remove all this mans Amazement at the different *Phænomena*'s of his Countrymens Carriage and Converſation.

For, to be begotten and born in the ſame way and manner, Educated in the ſame Country, and wearing all the ſame common humane nature, are concurrences 'tis true that might happily cauſe ſome faint reſemblances, but could not reaſonably be expected to create ſuch a Unity of temper, as to coun-

counterballance those many other accidents that urge the contrary.

The way of Mans Generation, and its attending Circumstances, seem alike, 'tis true; but without doubt there is a certain Magical Influence of nature (derived from Celestial Motions, or *Extraduce*) that tempers us all diversly in our very *fieri*, and gives each of us a several tincture whilst we lye loose in our first principles: and thus each Individual being blended in a different fashion by Na-

tures Myſterious Art (as I may ſay) it proves as difficult to find two Conſtitutions, as two Faces exactly alike.

From this various Contexture proceed our reſpective humours and Complexions, which often prove a more forcible cauſe of our Opinions and Paſſions, and of the diſſimilitudes and contrarieties of them, than bare Reaſon and Free-will: It certainly ſtrongly influences thoſe faculties in their operations, and in a greater meaſure too, than many

many weak and unwary Mortals apprehend, to whom ignorance in this point proves oftentimes a most unspeakable delusion and prejudice.

From this secret work of our first nature 'tis, that Man is, (as it were) a *Species* to Man, and our difference is more than that of *Numerical*.

And by this means our Heathens Countrymen, (having no infallible rule of Knowledge, nor steady guide of their Actions) might well be as different in their Opinions and

Practices, as they were in Natural Complexion, by which their Reaſon and Will was ſo ſtrongly led and byaſſed.

For alas, their Reaſon was dull and blunt, having no better edge than what it procured by frequent Colliſion and reflection on its ſelf; by all which notwithſtanding, it could never arrive (even in the beſt of them) to ſo much brightneſs and clearneſs, as to guide and fix them in the one ſteady Truth, (in purſuit of which they ran into a thou-

thouſand Superſtitious & Idolatrous Errours) nor to ſo much ſtrength as to hold them to one conſtant regular Tenor of Goodneſs and Juſtice.

Nor indeed was it poſſible it ever ſhould; for they poor Creatures had as large a doſe of Natutural Corruption and infection derived from their unknown Parent *Adam*, as we, and yet were deſtitute of thoſe helps and antidotes that have by Gods grace allaied the mortal malignity of the venome in us, and leſſen-

ed much that dominion and power, which Errour and Vice naturally had over the Reaſon and Will of all men before the appearance and Doctrine of the holy Jeſus.

But again, my honeſt Heathen never thought of the vaſt number of their reſpective Gods and Temples, where each man worſhipped this or that Deity as his fancie led him, or the Choice and Cuſtom of the City or Country directed and required: ſurely no ſmall difference in mens Manners

ners and Opinions arose from this.

But farther still, *Greece* was Canton'd out into many petty Polities, and independent Commonwealths, governed by their proper distinct Laws and Constitutions: this too must needs create dissimilitudes as to Civil Observances, Customs, Practices, and Interests; though the common Education of the *Grecians*, as to the main, might be much alike, which he urges, *&c.*

And lastly, the several parts men acted in their re-

reſpective Political capacities, and the many different Occurrences and Emergencies that daily attend diverſly the Life and Action, Commerce and Buſineſs of each particular perſon, muſt accordingly modifie the Manners, Qualities, and Faſhions of men.

When I weigh theſe Circumſtances in my Authours Age and Country, truly his wonder ceaſes to be mine, and a far greater ariſes: *Miror magis undique noſtris uſque adeo turbatur agris.*

Virgil Ecl. 1.

I wonder much more at the many diverſities and diviſions in our own Climate, this poor Iſland, where moſt or all of the other reaſons and occaſions of difference wholly ceaſe: And I looſe my ſelf in a Maze and Labyrinth of thought, whilſt I ſtrive to purſue the genuine cauſe of our divers Opinions and Practices, when (as one would think) all Reaſons imaginable concur for Union and Harmony.

We acknowledge all one God and Jeſus, and have

have all one revealed will of that God done into plain good Engliſh, free of diſtracting ambiguities (like the Heathen Oracles) or perplext and obſcure ſignifications.

We have all one and the ſame gracious King and Governour, the ſame Laws, Statutes and Ordinances, made by one conſent of our ownſelves, and not impoſed at the Arbitrary diſcretion of another: We have all one common Intereſt to preſerve Property and Peace, and are all ſhut up by Na-

Nature, and inclos'd in one Iſland; as if ſhe deſigned univerſal Concord and Likeneſs, in excluſion of all Forreign varieties and mixtures.

We have all one common Nature as Men, conſiſting of Reaſon and Will, the Eſſential Faculties of one ſimple Eſſence the Soul; their reſpective objects too are One, True, and Good: And we have all equally one Infallible Guide to both theſe, the Book of God.

And yet from all theſe Eſſential ſimplicities, environ'd

viron'd on all ſides with Circumſtances pointing at Unity; through an odd Caprice of ill manage, and by a monſtrous Equivocal Generation, ariſe thouſands of diverſities.

The Reaſon of Men (in itſelf undoubtedly the ſame) ſhall yet, in diſquiſition of its own object, Truth, make innumerable Excurſions; I mean, as many men ſhall have ſo many opinions about a ſingle Verity; which is impoſſible, if they did not act in ſpite of Nature, and argue more with their Will

Will than Underſtanding.

For, *Poſitis omnibus ad agendum requiſitis*, Truth diſplayed is as much the neceſſary object of our Underſtanding, as Light is of Eyes open and ſound.

I confeſs endleſs Evaſions, and contrary plauſibilities may be oppoſed to Truth, though never ſo clear; but 'tis apparent then, that Hypocriſie and Subtlety, Arrogancy and Obſtinacy, not Reaſon or Judgment, hold the Cudgels. And hence ſwarms that

that daily ſpurious Iſſue of Anſwers upon Anſwers, and Rejoynders upon Rejoynders, which our Modern Diſſenters oppoſe to the Sober Aſſertions and Loyal Vindications of our Church and King. Anſwers indeed they call them, and they are ſo as far as the Title-Page goes, but no farther, alas!

I have methinks ſo good an opinion of the Judgment of two or three of the chief Oracles that head and lead our modern Schiſmaticks, that I will never grant their private thoughts

thoughts and publick writings to run parallel: ſuch ſtrong and plain truths as are daily urged to them, muſt of neceſſity carry Confutation (and ſhould of right Conviction too) along with them.

No, no, they are loth to leave their old Aſſociates, and a ſhame-fac'd reluctancy reſtrains them from giving themſelves the Lye: They will not now deſert the old Cauſe, though ſhe have loſt the field Spiritual and Temporal too; nor lay down their Weapons, though Con-

Conquered, and generouſly received to Grace.

But by their leave, if this be true, the Caſe is worſe and worſe; their Faith is Faction, their Reaſon Rancour, and their Courage Contradiction. And we muſt beware of ſuch ſly Combatants; for though they have loſt the Field, they may ſtill by Stratagem gain the Battle: Such Exploits have been afore. We fairly Conquered them once, 'tis true; but not following Victory home, we now run the ſame Fate, and ſuf-

ſuffer the ſame Judgment the *Iſraelites* did, by permitting the *Canaanites* to dwell among them, *viz.* many of us have been enticed to go a whoring after their Gods, and as the Angel told the people at *Bochim*, they are left to be *thorns in our ſides.* Judg. *Chap.* 2. *v.* 3.

'Tis now 1700 years very near, ſince Chriſtianity was promulgated; and not much leſs, ſince the true Model and Platform of it was delivered into our hands, to be for ever the Architype, Rule and

and Standard of Faith and Practice. And yet from this plain and uniform Model, designed for the help and rule of our Edification, have in all Ages been drawn by the warm fancies of busie Enthusiasts, and the like, such monstrous Medlies, and odd Landskips of Opinions, as (in another kind) the most extravagant Conceptions of Poets and Painters have never equal'd. And truly I think one and the other have some grounds much alike for their Whimsies;

I am ſure they have each of them had too much of one priviledge, and that is the *Quidlibet audendi Poteſtas.* Horat. *de art. Poët.*

Chriſtianity, I ſay, is now almoſt 1700 years old; and though it, as its Author, is ever one and the ſame, yet what by the Supineneſs of its true, and what by the devices of its pretended Profeſſours, it is at this day ſo overgrown with thorns and briars, and the moſſy Excreſcences of rotten and Corrupted Skulls, that (had not our God been very

very gracious) we ſhould hardly diſtinguiſh and diſcern its genuine beauty and Native Luſtre through the Rubbiſh and Barricade of Schiſm and Hereſie.

I always thought Gods holy word ſo plain, that to invent an Heterodox Doctrine, we muſt do a violence to that, and our own Reaſon too: And yet what nice diſſections have been made of theſe Scriptures, by too bold and curious Inſpectours into the Secrets of God? How many Texts have they ſet upon

upon the Rack, and endeavoured by cruel and unnatural diſtortions, to make them ſay as they would have them, and confeſs what they never knew? from whence have followed ſuch rents and diſlocations in ſome Members of our Religion, as (I fear) are almoſt become paſt Cure.

I would fain know what one thing material hath been diſcovered by the noiſe and buſtle of all theſe buſie and ſubtle Pates, that was not as well or better known in

the very first Centurie. I believe that in all the whole prodigious Catalogue of Voluminous Tracts, and laboured Controversies, (enough at this day to make good St. *John's* Hyperbole) you cannot find one new Truth of any import or significancie to our Religion, which was not known 1500 years ago. On the contrary, I am sure they have, together with a thousand falsities, invented perplexities and empty trifles without number,

Joh. *Chap.* *last v. last.*

ber, which the pureſt ages of Chriſtianity never dreamt of.

Some have ſtretcht their brains to graſp Myſteries beyond their reach, and would crowd the Infinite Eſſence, and Ineffable Attributes of that great God into the ſenceleſs rules & terms of their Schools, whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain.

What horrid Hereſies have men run into, by preſuming to fathome the Myſterie of the bleſſed Trinity! and whilſt they have forcibly preſt Rea-

ſon on to take as large a ſtep as Faith, they have ſtumbled and fell, to their utter confuſion.

My humble (yet ſtedfaſt) Faith in the hidden Things of God, can reſt fully ſatisfied in the ὅτι, without preſuming (to no purpoſe) ſo far as the διότι. nay, and my Reaſon too (if it muſt needs be medling) doth here moſt juſtly acquieſce, without farther ſcrutiny, in this concluſion; *'Tis certainly ſo, becauſe God hath ſaid it.*

And thus I can eaſily believe that the Godhead con-

consists of Three Persons, without the help of ὑπόστασις, *persona* or *suppositum*: and the Incarnation of my Saviour is a Mystery indeed in Divinity, but none in Philosophy to me; for that tells me, 'twas as easie (to speak *more humano*) for the Almighty to set Nature at work in Holy *Maries* Womb to frame a man of her Seed, as to make a Woman out of the side of *Adam*.

But 'tis my opinion, that the truest Faith supersedes all arguing about the My-

ſteries of our Religion; and when St. *Peter* bids us *be ready to give a reaſonable account*, 'tis not of fathomleſs Secrets, but of our Hope and Faith in Jeſus. Yet that Faith (I am perſwaded) was always moſt acceptable with our Saviour, that acknowledged him with a plain and ſimple ſincerity, without a why, or wherefore: And I believe the nimble Confeſſion of *Nathaniel*, though upon a ſlight occaſion, was better approved of by

1 Pet. 3. 15.

Joh. 1.49, 50.

by Christ, than the cautious proceed, and deliberate advances of Judicious *Nichodemus.* 3 Joh. 9.

However, I like not that high flight of the Father neither, *Certum est, quia impossibile est*; nor his who said, there were not Impossibilities enow in Religion for an active Faith: such Hyperbolick strains do Christianity no kindness I am sure, especially in the Mahometan and Pagan world.

For were *Socrates, Cicero,*

cero, or *Seneca* now alive, I might with far better ſucceſs attempt their Converſion, by the rehearſal of Chriſts Sermon on the Mount, or St. *Pauls* Epiſtles, than by aſſaulting raſhly their unprepared Reaſon with the difficulties and ſeeming contradictions of the *Athanaſian* Creed.

It can no ways properly be ſaid, that there is any one Impoſſibility in the Bible: For if the Letter and matter of fact be true, (as it may on that ſcore juſtly claim a ſtronger

ger title to verity than any Book of longer or later date, which yet we own without ſcruple) then the Conceſſion that 'twas of Divine Inſpiration eaſily follows; and then the conſequence is as neceſſary, That whatever it contains muſt be of infallible truth and certainty.

And what if we cannot ſolve its Myſteries? Their firſt deſign was to be objects of Chriſtian Faith and humble acquieſcence, not of Pert and Curious Argumentation.

If we will believe nothing, but what we can make out, and clear of doubts, (ay and ſtrong ones too) even in things obvious and familiar, and with which we converſe every day, we muſt ſhut the whole Viſible World out of doors, and ſit down content with abſolute *Scepticiſm*.

I declare I have as even a notion of Spirit as of Body, and underſtand Cogitation fully as well as Extenſion: I am no more privy to the Mechaniſm of my own hearts Motion,

Motion, than I am to the Myſterie and feats of Memory and Imagination, or to the way how my Soul by a detachment of nimble Emiſſaries, commands my foot to move in an inſtant. In a word, I underſtand nothing of this kind by adequate and Commenſurate Science, but by Philoſophick gueſs, or Allegorick repreſentations. 11 Eccle. 5.

I remember that a now Reverend and moſt Learned Prelate, (at whoſe private Lectures I had the honour long ago to attend)

tend) amongſt other moſt excellent notices, told us, that Immaterial, Infinite, and the like, were Negatives indeed in words, (for the barrenneſs of Language, and our own weakneſs and ignorance) but properly and in themſelves they were abſolute Poſitivities; and again, that their Contraries, Finite and Material, were pure Negations in reſpect of the other.

Deſcartes, who opened the way to his Philoſophy by ſtopping his Ears and cloſing his Eyes, and ſtrip-

ſtripping himſelf naked to bare Cogitation, found out one Original Truth (as he thought) *viz. Cogito, Ergo Sum*: what a prodigious fallacie paſt upon this acute man! he might as well (in that caſe) have argued, *Curro, Ergo Sum*; the argument had been as good, though it lay at a little farther diſtance. Thus are we all weak and blind in Natural and Divine Secrets and Myſteries. 8 Eccle. 17.

The Canon of Holy Scripture is without doubt ſo plain, as to Eſſentials

ſentials of Faith and Practice, that I cannot perſwade my ſelf to believe there was ever ſuch a thing as *Nuda Hæreſis:* I am rather inclin'd to think that Secular Motives of pride, diſcontent, and avarice, raiſed the boyling ferment in ambitious and reſtleſs heads; as was moſt notoriouſly apparent in the buſineſs of *Arrius.* This Spirit that agitated in the firſt Ages of Chriſtianity, worketh now ſtill in the Children of diſobedience: And when good and Learned men offer

offer at a Cure by publick writing or diſpute, the bad ſucceſs and fruitleſs conſequence ſhews, that the wrong remedy is applyed; the malady lying more in the perverſeneſs of the Will, than the miſtake of the Intellect.

And by this means, Demonſtration itſelf often fails of Conviction; and the ſtrongeſt and plaineſt Truths urged home to Schiſmaticks, ſtay not, but are ſent back daily in a faint retort, ſtuft more with weak Evaſion, and peeviſh Cavil, than Right

or

or Reaſon. Juſt thus 'tis at this very Juncture, and (if in this caſe Inferences *de facto* are good conſequences) is like always to be.

I wonder that *Conſtantine* ſhould ſo far countenance that damnable Hereſie of *Arrius*, as to allow it the dangerous ſcope of a free Debate in the Council of *Nice*. Had not Royal Reſtraints, and legal Penalties, been a ſafer and more Orthodox way to repreſs an Errour ſo palpable, that it carried its Confutation in its

its own face? No doubt but ſome Plenipotentiaries of Heaven itſelf aſſiſted at that Spiritual Treaty, yet (as far as I underſtand) their ſtrong and zealous Arguments could hardly reduce the contrary faction to an amicable and Chriſtian complyance; whom pride had fore-armed with reſolution to demur at Demonſtration, and cavil at Conviction. However, with much ado, after a tedious debate, they compoſed the Catholick Creed, that bears the name. Diſ-

Diſputes in Religion are often fruitleſs (becauſe improper) Applications, and ſerve but to increaſe the heat and feud of Opiniatours: They may indeed confirm the Right, but very rarely convince the Erroneous party.

I conceive the Emperour was in a manner forced to give this Hereſie ſo much looſe Line as a fair debate; its Contagion began to rage in the Chriſtian world, and like the Jewiſh Idolatry, it had ſeated itſelf in the high Places too: beſides, its

its high pretences might incline him to think the occaſion worthy the ſolemnity of that famous confluence: for although the conteſt was comprized within the narrow compaſs of two Greek words, yet the controverted point was of no leſs importance, than the Divinity of our God and Saviour. Yet that all this was the wrong remedy for that diſeaſe, appears plainly from its breaking out with re-doubled heat and violence in the ſucceeding Reign of *Conſtantius*. The

The edge and keenneſs of our preſent diviſions, we may chiefly date from the late Act of Toleration: Such allowances proceed from Royal mercy and tenderneſs, 'tis true, but the miſchiefs that always enſue are innumerable, and grow to a formidable ſtature by inſenſible degrees, till at length they ſuck themſelves into a ſtate and habit ſtrong enough for Rebellion, even from the breaſts of Royal Indulgence. My opinion is, (in all deep humility) that by ſuch con-

condeſcentions of Grace, Princes act againſt their own power, and elude their own Authority; they give Licenſe to worſhip the righteous God a wrong way, and eſtabliſh Schiſm in Church and State by a Law. Conceſſions of this kind Extorted (as it were) from Royal Clemency and pity may indeed confirm preſent Impunity, but cannot give Innocence to Diſſenters: To whom we may boldly and juſtly rejoyn, whenever they plead the Kings Grace, in the words of

19 Matt. 8. of our Saviour to the Phariſees, *Moſes* becauſe of the hardneſs of your hearts ſuffered you this, (*to put away your Religion*) but from the beginning it was not ſo.

'Tis now a Soleciſm in Chriſtianity to talk of a weak Brother, and Liberty of Conſcience is nonſence *totidem verbis*. God forbid that at this day, after 1600 years, there ſhould remain any doubts or ſcruples unreſolved in our Religion, when 'tis openly diſplaied to the view

view of all men, without ſhades or obſcurities, in moſt clear and lively colours.

If the good and wholſome Act for Uniformity had continued ſtill in full force, it had in time found mens Purſes more tender than their Conſciences: At leaſt, it would have done ſo much good, that the old Pique had been buried with this Generation, and the next would have Conformed of courſe. Whereas now I fear this new Liberty hath fixt the Contagion

in

in the very Vitals of our diſſenting brethren, and their Children will be tainted *Ex traduce.*

Diſputandi pruritus eſt ſcabies Eccleſiæ, ſaid a Learned Countryman of ours: It hath certainly been a great promoter of Schiſm, and the fuel of Faction. To ſee the Elaborate follies of the ſubtile Schoolmen, and the quirks of Polemical Divinity, (what an odd word that is to affix to the plain and eaſie Religion of the meek and humble Jeſus?) their curious niceties in reſearches

ches of matters, either altogether above, or else not worth our knowledge; their pretty Mazes and Labyrinths drawn by Art in puzled and bewildred Thought; but above all, their slippery evasions, and nimble escapes, (like *Hercules's Protean* Antagonist) when prest hard by close and solid reasoning, this is all matter of as great diversion, as it had been to have been present at the odd posture of Circumstances in the first confusion of Tongues at *Babel.*

'Tis pretty to obſerve their Schools; in what order and awful ſilence non-Entities ſit ranged into Claſſes according to their proficiency or quality, and not one dares move till call'd out to Say, and then they ſpeak in the Language of *Utopia*. They can (with ſtrange dexterity) make an appoſite Anſwer to an unintelligible Queſtion, and will argue *pro* and *con* whole hours together, about what was never ſeen, felt, heard or underſtood. 'Tis impoſſible to poſe them; for

for when they cannot enodate your Argument, they ſerve you with a diſtinction the ſame trick that *Alexander* did the *Gordian* knot. They can as readily deſcribe the parts and proportions of a Chimæra, as you can of a man or a horſe. But their maſterpiece lies in this, they can underſtand words that ſignifie nothing, or (which is much the ſame) ſignifie they know not what; and yet they have a ſlight to make the ſame words mean any thing. But this you'll

ſay is very ſtrange; take any common ordinary truth or Propoſition, ſtrip it naked of its plain Engliſh, and ſend it to be dreſt in their Tire-room, its Port and Garniture ſhall immediately become ſo majeſtick, that (though you were never ſo well acquainted with it before) you ſhall gaze at it with as much Ignorance, as the honeſt Countryman did at the Powder of *Album-Græcum*, before he underſtood the trick on't.

Theſe men can baffle Truth in what faſhion and

and to what degree you pleaſe; as alſo advance a Falſitie how far you will, to *probabile*, *veriſimile*, and (upon a good occaſion) to abſolute demonſtration.

From their Repoſitories, men of ambitious and working Pates have been furniſhed with Tools and Inſtruments of all ſorts and ſizes, to form and faſhion, file and vary Doctrines and Opinions ſuitable to the deſign and work in hand: Here are Moulds fitly prepared to caſt any Schiſm or Hereſie

in; and in ſhort, all Enginery and Artillery that the Church (militant too much in this ſence) can poſſibly want upon any occaſion, they can readily produce out of their Polemick Magazines.

With what ſly and ſubtle Artifices theſe men have infected Chriſtianity, or furniſhed others with means and methods of doing ſo, is beyond my power to declare; yet I doubt not but the ſpring and head of our many modern Sects and Schiſms might in ſome meaſure be

be traced up to theſe Fountains.

The Romaniſts I am ſure are very ſenſible of the great advantages their monſtrous Tenets receive from hence; they obſerve it ſeldome to fail at a dead lift; by its aſſiſtance they often confound the ſimple, and not ſeldom amuſe even the more knowing. However, they can make a ſafe retreat hither, when beaten out of the field; and their boldeſt Champions, to avoid the danger of a cloſe purſuit, muce nim-

bly, and ſculk in the ſubterfuges of this thorny wilderneſs.

It comes in my head here, to ſay, (though 'tis not much to the purpoſe, you'll think, but that's all one; and yet you may perceive it bears ſome ſquint relation to this diſcourſe too) I have often admired why *Ariſtotles* Philoſophy ſhould be (to ſo great a degree) the chief darling of ſo many Learned and Reverend men among us. They deduce all things from his Text, reduce all to him,

as

as the infallible Teſt of univerſal truth. I am but a very mean Judge, I confeſs, but yet I know there are ſome things in him very weak and ſhallow, many palpable Errours and notorious falſities; and in what he is moſt Excellent, the ſame hath been long ago, and is now found in two or three other Languages, without any the leaſt dependance on the Philoſopher, and this in a far greater degree of perfection too. But alas, the choiſeſt truths and

beſt Obſervations in *Italian*, *French*, *Latin*, or *Engliſh*, reliſh not near ſo well, nor have they half the poynancy, as when ſerved up with Grecian garniſh after the Attick Mode.

I had ſometime ſince an occaſional diſcourſe with a good and Learned man, who, upon quoting ſome ſaying of *Ariſtotles*, immediately (with emphatick admiration) ſubjoyns, The very ſame, ſaith he, with that of the Apoſtle! I have quite forgot the words, but 'twas ſome

ſome moral-doctrinal Precept I remember, which a thouſand men might have ſpoken as well as the Philoſopher; ſuch Propoſitions being (we all know) the impreſſes and common notions of Rational Nature: but *Ariſtotle* ſpoke Greek too, and therefore imitated the Apoſtle a twofold way.

Who would have thought that old *Homer* ſhould ever have arrived to ſo much Honour and Excellency as *Evangelizans* imports! that late good man and excellent Gre-

Grecian was in ſo high a degree his admirer, that thinking he deſerved better preferment than the firſt of the firſt rank of Poets, he would needs place him among the Goſpellers too. We are all apt to admire, then dote upon, and at length Idolize this or that part of Learning that hath moſtly engaged our Time, Labour, and Study: The reaſon is obvious, becauſe in that we can play a game to advantage with any Antagoniſt. So natural even to the beſt of men is Vain-glory. Not

Not but that I am a great admirer of Learning, and adore it at an awful distance almost to Superstition: Learning, I say, not in hypothetick fancies, dry empty Notions, and fruitless researches, but in solid practical Truths, reductive to the service of God, and the innocent profits and pleasures of Humane Life. The rest may be the diversion and accomplishment of such as enjoy Wealth, Ease, and Vacancy: but for my part, I declare, I had rather feel the

the warmth of the Sun, when I am very cold, than know whether *Ptolomie*, *Tycho*, or *Copernicus* come neareſt the truth. For when Wiſe and Learned men are poor and hungry, (which God knows too often happens) I obſerve that they ſtudy more to find out a good Dinner, than the Longitude; and to Compaſs a round ſum of Money, rather than to ſquare the Circle.

I obſerve too, that young men fledg'd and flown from their neſt of Notions in the Univerſi-

ty,

ty, when they come abroad quickly find, that Mathematical Demonſtrations, and Logical Axioms are the ſame neither *genere*, *ſpecie*, nor *numero*, with Meat, Drink, and Clothes; this engages them to a ſtudy of that which bears a nearer relation to ſelf-preſervation, and they (for the moſt part) take the old road of Mankind to purchaſe honeſt profit, and the Comforts of life, without much conſulting their old Acquaintances *Ariſtotle*, *Plato*, *Deſcartes*, or the like.

like. For as a Modern Satyriſt ſaith well in that,

Forcing our Nature never yet did good;
We muſt fall back to our old fleſh and blood.

This puts me in minde of the real diſgrace and detriment our Church ſuffers, by reaſon of the ſuperfluous number of young Divines; ſome with ſlender parts and mean Abilities; others without Experience and Conduct; and in theſe latter, a rude maſs of barren

ren unadjusted Notions, gives such an unsavory dash, and ridiculous odd kind of Air to their discourse and deportment, as always minds me of what *Charron* saith, *Faire quelque chose en Clerk, c'est le faire en Sot.* De la Sagesse Liv. 3. Chap. 13.

But the worst is, that many are without Employment suitable to the great Character they bear, how slightly soever esteemed of in our degenerate days. From each of these, many great mischiefs and inconveniences follow.

How

How many are forced to take ſhelter as Tutours or Chaplains in ill-affected Families, where their Stipend being often Arbitrary, and their dependance almoſt neceſſary, they are obliged to do their work after what faſhion they pleaſe, in whoſe hands their Salary and livelihood wholly depends: And when they have ſerved the turn they were firſt entertained for here, (or perhaps for ſome little peeviſh *Caprice* of the Godly old Lady) they

1 Sam. 2. 36.

are

are forced to march off with a cold Compliment: But if in this devout Family they have gotten ſome proficiencie in *Extempore* praying, prating pretty well without the Book, and the like, they are excellently appointed to be received into ſome blind Aſſembly or petty Conventicle, at leaſt as Probationers, and ſo on, *&c.*

Others again croſs the Channel, (preſuming, forſooth, that they may ſee faſhions on free-coſt) with *Omnia mea mecum porto*; but

but when Cold and Hunger pinches, and the *Philosophick* Portmantle comes to be examined, not one rag or single ſtiver is to be found amongſt all *Bias*'s baggage. Then they are forced to expreſs their wants very politely in the univerſal Language, and (like Vagabond *Polanders* here) they beg *formâ pauperis Scholaſtici* at ſome Convent or Monaſtery; where (as the caſe now ſtands) the matter a hundred to one comes to a bargain, & they prove Converts: and

ſo

ſo having in time imbibed pernicious Principles, as well as learned the art of putting them in practice, fraught with miſchievous Machinations, and ſeditious deſigns, they are delegated hither.

But I fear the Air of old *England* doth not reduce one of twenty at their arrival to ſuch an happy reconverſion, as by eſpecial Influence it did the good Dr.

But a Maladie beyond all redreſs is the near dependance our Clergy have for the moſt part upon

upon Lay-Patrons and Benefactours: The servile awe and confusion that possesses the young Divine whilst he Preaches before them, is altogether inconsistent with that modest boldness and temperate Assurance that ought (of necessity) to attend the Word, whether we inform or reprove. For if by chance our youth touch never so little upon what thwarts the private opinion, or gauls any one irregular practice of his Patron (though in never so general and distant a way)

way) he ſhall be ſure of ſuch a ſowre look, and correcting regard from his Worſhip at Dinner, as ſhall quite daſh the Countenance, and turn the ſtomack of our new *dignifié*, maugre the comfortable acceſſion of the late Benefice.

In this Caſe I wiſh all men were as happy as my ſelf, in bearing relation to a moſt Orthodox, Loyal, and pious honourable good Gentleman, *&c.*

To conclude all this, our own Souldiers for want of due pay and encou-

couragement, turn often Renegadoes, and by deſerting us become ſo many freſh ſupplies to our ſworn Enemies the Pyrates of *Rome* and *Geneva*. This advantage (ſuperadded to the force of the old Pique) enables them not only to fight at diſtance, but makes them ſo hardy as to board our torn and leaky veſſel, the poor Church of *England*; and 'tis all ſhe can do, with invincible courage to clear her decks of theſe furious Aſſailants.

I look upon the Romiſh Religion

Religion as the exacteſt piece of State-Policie, and the beſt contrived Myſterie of infallible Rule and Dominion, that ever yet appeared in the world. I always conſidered it under this notion, without any other regard or relation whatever: Its ſubtle tenets and deep Maximes ſpeak it ſuch; its ways and methods to preſerve and continue itſelf where 'tis already planted, and of propagating itſelf where not, do plainly ſhew, that the true deſign of it is merely Secu-

lar, contrived wholly for Temporal ends and purpoſes of Dominion, Avarice, Luſt, and in a word, of Univerſal Tyranny over the Souls and Bodies of Men and Women.

I verily believe its greateſt and moſt Learned Eccleſiaſtick Aſſertours ſee and know the trick well enough, though they keep the Myſterie as ſafe in the Conclave, as the *Trojans* did the *Palladium* in *Minerva's* Temple.

No

No Cabaliſts of State could
e're trepan,
With ſuch firm ſubtlety as
Rome's *Divan,*
ſaith one.

And thus the main Syſtem of their Religion being wholly relative to Political practicks, no wonder that all our Diſputes ableſt Writings, and trueſt Remonſtrances againſt them do ſo little good: They may indeed debar them from proſelyting men ſo eaſily as before; but the two Poles ſhall ſooner

meet, than the ſtrongeſt Truths and Demonſtrations ſhall reduce one of the great Churchmen of *Rome.*

Alas, the Caſe is quite of another nature: nor do they themſelves think it worth while to enter the Liſts of publick Diſputation, or anſwer the repeated oppoſitions of our Learned Churchmen, unleſs (as our chief Diſſenters) it be to comply with the Expectations of their own Herd; and then too, the main deſign is (not to argue impartially

and

and ſolidly) but ſtill more and more to amuſe and intangle the poor ignorant Admirers of, *An Anſwer to Dr.* &c.

Si Pergama dextrâ defendi poſſent, &c. comes always in my mind, when I conſider that the preſent poſture of affairs is rather worſe than better, and at the ſame time think on the Writings of Biſhop *Jewel*, *Laud*, and thoſe other Heroe's that did and ſaid all that was poſſible almoſt, to little purpoſe alas! and pray what can we do more?

They will not ſo much as argue to ſatisfie any ſcruple of their own Diſciples; the device of Implicite Faith ſuperſedes their trouble as to that. And if by chance among them a gaul'd Conſcience offer to kick, (though never ſo ſorely pinch'd) one ſharp word or frown of the Inquiſition, ſilences the poor Soul better (to their purpoſe) than a thouſand Syllogiſms: *And thus theſe men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.*

How

How quite contrary to all this, is the proceed of our Church? how different is her Carriage? how frequent, earneſt, and tender are her applications to the Diſſenting Brethren? With what reluctancie and force to herſelf, (after all means fail) are reſtraints and penalties gently apply'd as the *Ratio ultima rerum*, which ſhe is far from making the Inſcription of loud and infallible Artillery?

And yet what Seditious Murmurs do theſe men re-

turn to her ſoft & paſſionate Invitations? What Innovations & Changes do they not ſecretly attempt? What evil Repreſentations of Church and Government do they not ſcatter? What ſhuffling peeviſh returns do they make to the Writings and Sermons of good and wiſe Men, in vindication of regular Piety and true Loyalty? And they are ſo bold too, as to preſs Gods holy Word for the juſtification of all this obſtinacy; but 'tis not the firſt time that Holy Scripture

ture hath been the Argument, when the deſtruction of the Allegatour hath proved the conſequence. 2 Pet. 3. 16.

Our Church, by applying the ſoft and gentle Remedies of Statutable puniſhments, and legal Mulcts, never intended to force groſs blindneſs, or impoſe the Tyranny of Implicite Faith on any man; but rather the quite contrary, ſhe carefully and wiſely conſidered that a little ſmarting might make the ſcales peel off from their Eyes,

& by ſome little bitterneſs ſhe deſigned no more harm to them, than *Tobias* did to his Father, by throwing Gall in his Eyes to make him ſee.

And here I'll preſume to inſert the words of a Learned & Reverend Gentleman now among us: *We*, ſaith he, *that are Miniſters of the Church of* England *may be content; nay, we may really wiſh that all our Laity had as much true ſolid underſtanding in Religion as our Clergy. We can get no advantage by your want of knowledge,*

no

no more than you can do by ours: We have no Spiritual Cheat with which to delude you, for the repreſenting of which we ſhould ſtand in need either of darkneſs, or of a falſe light. We have nothing in our publick Profeſſion which the wiſeſt men, the moſt pious Chriſtians may not outwardly practice; nothing in our Faith which they ought not inwardly to believe. We know and are well aſſured, that the onely reaſon why our Church is not more generally embraced, and admired,

mired, is, because the purity of its Doctrine, the sobriety of its Devotion, the moderation of its Discipline, the largeness of its Charity, are not more impartially and calmly examined, more generally understood.

Our Church in its Spiritual State as you are Christians, is most conformable to the rules of Christ, to the Apostolick practice, to the Primitive Institutions: In its rational State as you are Men, its Doctrines are very agreeable to the reason of Man-

Mankind; its Precepts moſt becoming the pureſt and ſtricteſt Laws of Nature, Vertue, and Morality: In its Political State as ye are Engliſhmen, *its Intereſt is inſeparable from that of our Nation and Government.*

We are therefore ſo far from being jealous of your moſt curious & exact ſearch into the Practice and Principles of our Church, that we deſire it; nay, we moſt earneſtly beſeech it. We are in no danger from Mens moſt ſubtle inquiry into it; we may be from their

their utter careleſneſs, and indifferency towards it.

We are not againſt any Mans ſeeing Spiritual Truths; onely we would not have the blind preſume to teach others to ſee: We would not have Men think they ſee, when they do not, which is the moſt certain way for them never to ſee at all: we would have you know as much as you can; onely we would have you believe that both you and we may know much more than we do: we intreat you to ſtrive to know all in a right

right way, by ſober degrees, for right purpoſes, uſes and ends. Dr. *Sprats* Sermon at *Whitehall* before His Majeſty.

I will here be bold to ſubjoin by way of Corollary to the fore-going excellent words: It hath puzled my neareſt and niceſt Inquiſition, and plunged my cloſeſt ſcrutiny in deep amazement, when I have conſidered that ſo many of our Countrymen ſhould out of an odd peeviſh humour, and moſt unaccountable Caprice, forſake that ſober, decent way

way of Worſhip, which the Eſtabliſhed Law preſſes, which their gracious King and Governour himſelf ſtrictly obſerves, together with the Loyal Nobility and Gentry, and the Reverend and Learned Clergy of this Land; that they ſhould (I ſay) leave theſe good, theſe great, theſe wiſe Examples, contrary to the obedient humble temper of Chriſtians, contrary to the prudence and intereſt of rational men, and contrary to the honeſt good nature of true Engliſhmen:

men: And all this out of a blind and ignorant complyance to the Insinuating hypocritical perswasions of a few leading prejudiced Presbyters. For, true scruple of Conscience cannot be said to urge them to this Nonconformity; not one of five hundred understanding the intrinsick state of the Question, or the true nature of the Controverted point, any more than they do *Arabick*: But granting that they could plead Christian Scruple, how far would even that

fall

fall ſhort of Juſtification, ſeeing that the commands to Obedience are ſo abſolute, ſo plain, ſo poſitive, and the reaſons for Nonconformity (even at beſt) ſo obſcure, ſo weak, ſo dubious? In a word, the Faith of our Separatiſts is as blind and implicite as that of the Papiſts; the deſign of their Doctrines as Subtle, Senſual, and Secular.

But to return to the Romaniſts: that the trick ſhould paſs upon the common Herd of the Ignorant and Credulous, is not

not at all ſtrange, nor that the well-contriv'd Impoſture ſhould go down pretty cleverly with the middle ſort of Mankind, is it much to be wondred at; but that ſo notorious, ſo bold, ſo ſawcie a cheat, ſhould engage the Wiſe and Noble, nay Kings and Princes, to a complyance ſo mean and ſervile (as heretofore eſpecially) this is a perfect Prodigie to me.

What depth of ſubtilty is implyed in the Doctrine of the Popes Supremacy and Infallability, the

baſis of implicite Faith, indiſputable obedience,& abſolute dependance on the Church and Court of *Rome?* What great and glorious Scenes of pomp, pride, and ſplendour, are conſequential to the neceſſity of making all deferences and humble appeals to his Holineſs?

The Doctrine of Purgatory is a moſt excellent bait for a wealthy ſinner on his death-bed: how eagerly and zealouſly he exchanges his Bags for Maſſes, that he may not be ſtopt at that hot

ſtage

ſtage, but be immediately diſpatch'd to the more agreeable warmth of *Abraham*'s boſom? Thus by a pretty kind of Platonick Chymiſtry, the ſubtle Prieſt makes real Gold, by an imaginary & fictitious fire.

But above all, to dive into and diſcover the Tempers and Inclinations, Deſigns and Contrivances, Actions and Paſſions, nay the moſt retired thoughts of Men and Women, auricular Confeſſion is an unparallel'd device: 'Tis certainly the moſt impudent Incroachment

ment and unnatural piece of Tyranny that was ever impos'd on Mankind; I mean, as 'tis abuſed and disfigured by them from its firſt good deſign and Inſtitution.

And now, you will ſay, 'tis time for me to ſpeak ſomething that bears a nearer and more particular relation to the Title-Page; truly I intended to do ſo; but at preſent I am weary; as well as you; and will end this with two words more, concerning the death of Mr. *Langhorn* and the late Jeſuits.

If

If the depoſitions of the Kings Witneſſes (as the Law always allows them to be, ſo) were not *de facto* true, and Evident, if the proceedings of the Court were not moſt impartial, juſt & ſteady, & by conſequence the Parties brought in guilty by an honeſt, unbiaſs'd, and moſt equitable Verdict; if all this (I ſay) were not ſo, then there is no Sun, Moon, or Stars, the whole viſible world is a deluſion, nor will I ever believe my ſences more; and therefore that Learned rational men at the very point of

ceive

death ſhould fondly conceive, that the Popes diſpenſation or their reciprocal Abſolutions would expiate the Guilt and Crime of a Poſitive, Deliberate, Mortal Sin (I mean the ſtedfaſt abjuration of true matter of fact) this is a preſumption of that force and contradiction to the Genius of Chriſtianity, & ſo contrary to the very Eſſentials and Fundamentals of humane Nature, that I know not what to reſolve it into, but a total Dereliction of God Almighty, or elſe ſome latent Frenſie, in thoſe Delinquents. *The End.*